



## Peregrine Falcons



Peregrine falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) are found throughout the world (except Antarctica.) However, eastern United States peregrine falcon populations declined sharply between the 1940s and 1960s due to the widespread use of the pesticide DDT and several other factors. DDT caused egg-shell thinning, egg breakage, and hatching failure.

After DDT was banned (1972) and the peregrine was placed on the endangered species list in 1973, various natural resource agencies began reintroducing peregrine falcons back into their native range. This program involved the release of captive-reared peregrines with the hope that these birds would re-colonize their historic breeding range.

Between 1975 and 1993, over 1200 young falcons were released throughout the East by regional peregrine falcon recovery teams. These birds were released into the wild using a management technique referred to as “hacking.”

In 1980, peregrine falcons nested successfully in Virginia for the first time since the DDT era. Over the last two decades, the breeding coastal Virginia populations of peregrine falcons have made a slow and steady recovery while the mountain populations have lagged behind.

Recovery of the American Peregrine in the Central Appalachians has been slow to nonexistent (with the exception of one successful pair in Shenandoah National Park from 1994-1998.) Over the last 15 years, the number of breeding pairs in the Central Appalachians has still not met the recovery goal set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mainly due to their success in the Northeast, and in eastern coastal and urban areas, the peregrine falcon was removed from the Endangered Species List in 1999. However, it is currently listed as “Threatened” in Virginia and in many other eastern states.

Since the park resumed its Peregrine Falcon Restoration Program in the summer of 2000, the park has successfully released over 50 young falcons into the mountains of Virginia. As a result of this targeted restoration effort, the park now supports one breeding pair of peregrines.